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## **CONCLUSION: MAKING IT HAPPEN**

The Weber River Basin is at a critical juncture. The basin lies on the north end of the fast-growing Wasatch Front where much of the state's prime agricultural land is rapidly becoming urban. The basin is also located just south of the Bear River, which is a potential source of developable water for the Wasatch Front. As a result, water managers and planners within the basin will play an important role in meeting Utah's future water needs. The basin is also entering an important phase in the effort to improve and preserve water quality and the environment. With the population expected to increase rapidly in the coming decades, water quality and other environmental problems could easily become worse before they are improved. All stakeholders need to work together to ensure that current problems are resolved in a timely fashion and that future problems are avoided. Sufficient time and resources must be devoted to these efforts in order to sculpt the best and most efficient solutions.

The challenges facing the Weber River Basin are complex—solutions will involve many stakeholders and may stir emotional public debate and scrutiny. Water planners and managers within the basin must rise to the occasion and resolve these problems with care and deliberation. The timing and size of new water developments must be carefully balanced against the ability of water conservation and efficient management of existing water supplies to meet future needs. Water quality needs, environmental values and other issues must be understood and properly considered. Doing this, and cooperating with federal, state and local interests in the planning and decision-making process, will enable leaders within the Weber River Basin to meet their future water needs while preserving the aesthetic and ecological integrity of the environment.

## **LOCAL AND GOVERNMENT ROLES IN MEETING FUTURE NEEDS**

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One of the guiding principles listed in the state water plan, *Utah's Water Resources—Planning for the Future*, is that the responsibility for making many water-related decisions resides with local leaders. These leaders are best able to make wise decisions by fully educating the public on current water resources issues and seeking their input in the decision-making process. The state of Utah and federal government assist in this process by setting policy (as necessary), providing valuable guidance on issues of statewide and national concern, and giving financial and technical assistance when possible. Working together with the public and government agencies with water-related responsibilities will empower local leaders with the tools and support needed to meet the future needs of the Weber River Basin. These roles are discussed in more detail below.

### **The Role of Local Stakeholders: Stewards of the Weber River Basin**

Water resources stakeholders in the Weber River Basin include any individual or organization that has an interest or role in water management activities. This includes people who live, work or recreate within the management area as well as many local, state and federal agencies. These local stakeholders need to play an important role in the planning and decision-making process within their individual communities and the basin. They are the ones who depend upon the water and other resources the most and without whose support water management activities are largely unsuccessful. These individuals are also the ones most likely to be direct and active stewards over their resources, as not doing so may impair their quality of life and that of future generations.

### **The Role of Government: Guiding and Assisting Local Efforts**

State and federal agencies are important contributors to effective water resources planning and management in the Weber River Basin. These agencies have and will continue to offer valuable technical and financial resources that assist local decision-makers with their planning and management efforts.

State and federal agencies possess a wealth of technical data and knowledge regarding the water resources of the basin and important issues associated with their development and use. These agencies need to continue to make this information readily available to local stakeholders who typically have neither the time nor the resources to collect and research this information. This information allows local stakeholders to make educated decisions based on sound scientific facts. State and federal agencies can foster a spirit of cooperation by attending local planning activities and meetings. Active participation by these agencies will also help ensure that local plans comply with all state and federal laws and regulations.



*Pineview Dam was built by the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation as part of the Weber Basin Project and is a good example of the value of strong local, state and federal cooperation.*

The Weber Basin Water Conservancy District's aquifer storage and recovery demonstration project is one of many examples of the role government can play in assisting local water management officials. Funded by the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation, this project has enjoyed strong technical support from various state agencies as well as Weber State University; and, if successful, will have a positive impact on the ability of surface and ground water resources within the basin to meet future demands.

#### **RESOLVING CONFLICTS AND LOOKING TOWARD THE FUTURE**

Although water managers and planners throughout the basin share a common goal—to meet the future water needs of the Weber River Basin's citizens in a timely and efficient manner—they do not always agree on the best way to go about it. In the Snyderville Basin and Park City areas, these differences have risen to a level that many believe is counterproductive and damaging to the long-term relationships and cooperation that is

required to meet the needs of the area's citizens. This and other conflicts within the basin need to be resolved. The state can help with these sensitive matters by providing fair and impartial policy and guidance, as well as strong leadership. Local stakeholders can also help by working together to craft win-win solutions that build relationships and forge public support.

As the basin's population grows, so will the demands on the available water supplies. The challenges associated with these growing demands will not go away, they will only intensify. Local stakeholders need to prepare now to be in a favorable position to satisfy future needs.